JOHN HART, D. D.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

I pray you remember the Poor.

Amos 8. 6. *Hear, O ye that ſwallow up the needy, even to make the Poor of the Land to fail, making the Ephah ſmall and the Shekel great, falſifying the ballance by Deceit, that you may buy the poor for ſilver, and the needy for a pair of ſhooes.*

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The Charitable CHRISTIAN.

OR,

A Word of Comfort from the God of Comfort, to ſuch as are truly Poor.

And a Word of Chriſtian Counſel and Advice to ſuch as are worldly Rich, ſtirring them up to the Chriſtian Duty, and practiſe of Charity.

With ſome powerful Motives and perſwaſions thereunto, drawn from the Word of God, to convince men of the neceſſity of this Chriſtian Duty; with the ſore Evils and Calamities which are threatned in the Word of God, againſt Unmerciful Men.

Pſal. 41. 1, 2, 3.

Bleſſed is he that conſidereth the Poor, the Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble: The Lord will preſerve him and keep him alive, and he ſhall be bleſſed upon the Earth. The Lord will ſtrengthen him upon the bed of Languiſhing, and will make his bed in his ſickneſs.

Publiſhed by a Lover of Hoſpitality.

Printed by H. B. for J. Clark, W. Thackery, and T. Paſſinger. 1685.

BODLEIAN
18 AUG 1948
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THE CHARITABLE Christian.

1 Tim. 17, 18, 19.

Charge them that are Rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor truſt in uncertain Riches; but in the living God, which giveth us richly all things to injoy.

That they do good, that they be rich in good Works, ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate.

Laying up in ſtore for themſelves a good foundation againſt the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal Life.

THe Bleſſed Apoſtle in theſe Words lays down ſeveral Arguments & Perſwations to Charity, which in this age we now live in, is even almoſt grown out of date with moſt men. For notwithſtanding there is a great noiſe of Religion,

ligion abroad, yet it is also lamentable to consider, how irreligiously many men live, making great outward shew and pretence of Religion, but altogether deny & neglect the power and practice thereof, which in a great measure doth consist in the practice of Charity, as St. James saith in the first Chapter and the last verse: Pure Religion and undefiled before God, is this, to visit the Fatherless and the Widow in their Distress. That is, by relieving their necessities.

There are several Arguments that should provoke us to Charity in these words of the Apostle, as first, the Charge given to rich men. He doth not charge them in the Name of our King or State, but in the Name of the Great God of Heaven and Earth, whose Ambassador he was. The sum and substance of this charge is this, First, that they should not be high-minded; that is to say, lofty, proud, and scornful, disdaining to look upon those that are poor: and Secondly, That they should not trust in uncertain Riches, but in the living God. Men are apt to think themselves safe & secure, if they have gotten but Estates in their hands; but the Word of God saith otherwise. The Apostle here calls Riches uncertain, and Solomon saith of them, that they are Vanity of Vanities, meer empty nothing: things

which

which we ought not to covet after, for we came into the world naked without Riches and it is certain we shall carry none with us out of the World; then as St. Paul saith, 1 Tim. 6. 8. Let us, having food and rayment, be therewithal content. But if we will not, what saith the Apostle in the next Verse? If men will be rich, they fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition, For (saith he) the love of money is the Root of all evil. And then thirdly and lastly, he charges them, That they do good, that they be Rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate. And the reasons why we should do so are these, first, that we receive all we have from God: he gives us all things richly to injoy. Then secondly, by doing good and relieving the necessities of those that are in want we do thereby lay up in store for our selves, a good foundation for Eternal Life. God will not forget our work and labour of love towards the Poor. In as much as you have done it unto them, ye have done it unto me, saith Christ, Mat. 25. 40. And whatsoever we give unto the Poor, we lend unto the Lord, and he will certainly repay us.

Therefore let all those who expect mercy and favour from the Lord, seriously consider

and mind these following motives and inducements to Charity, propounded by a Godly Minister, a necessary Duty, which divers men are very prone to neglect. Dives would not give the Crumbs and Straps of his Table to poor Lazarus. Men in a full condition are not at all affected with the wants & necessities of others. See what an evil Unmercifulness is.

First, It is an argument of Covetousness: When Christ, Luke 16. 2. bids them make to themselves friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness (which he so calls, because of mens sin either in the getting or the using of them) saying, they could not serve God and Mammon. In the 3 Verse 'tis said, the Pharisees who were Covetous derided him, they thought Christ spake like an ignorant man; they could serve God and keep their wealth too, and not cast it away upon poor people. This shewed their covetousness, and what an evil covetousness is, St. Paul tells us; a covetous man is an Idolater, Eph. 5. 5. and hath no inheritance in the Kingdom of Heaven.

2. Unmercifulness is an argument of unbelief and distrust of God; men think if they give to the Poor, they must want themselves: but Prov. 28. 27. He that giveth to the Poor shall never lack. Here is the word of God for it, who is truth it self, and yet men distrust God.

and

and think of other ways to provide for themselves. I will keep that I have (saith the covetous man) if this be gone, I know not where to have more; the world is hard, and it is best to keep that we have. Thus unbelief discovers it self. Saith God, Give to the poor and thou shalt never lack: saith the hard-hearted man, Give to the Poor and thou shalt lack: and so gives God the lye. Eccles. 11. 1. Cast thy Bread upon the Water, and after many days thou shalt find it. No, saith the unmerciful man I shall never see it again, and so makes God a Lyar, and declares himself an unbeliever.

3. Unmercifulness is an argument that there is no love of God in that man, 1 John 3. 17. Whoso hath this worlds goods and seeth his Brother hath need, & shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? He may think, and others may think & say, he loves God but there is not one dram of Gods love in that man: for if a man did love God, he would love man, who is the image of God. Christ commanded us, that we love one another as he hath loved us, John 15. 12. He testified his love by giving his life, his blood for us, and we will not give a little bread, an old garment, a little silver, it is a clear demonstration that there is no love of God in us.

4. Unmercifulness, it hath much cruelty & unna-

unnaturalness in it, Isa. 58. 7. Saith the Lord, Deal thy bread to the hungry, cover the naked, and hide not thy self from thine own flesh: The poor are our own flesh, Mal. 2. 10. Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us? Prov. 22. 2. The Rich and the Poor meet together, the Lord is the Maker of them all. Now if we hide our eyes from them, if we will not consider their necessities & relieve them, we are cruel and unnatural; if a man be naked or hungry, he will seek to cloath & feed himself, he will not hate his own flesh; Eph. 5. 29. No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it. When men therefore refuse to strengthen the hand of the poor and needy, they despise & hate their own flesh, they are unnatural, & to prevent this, God hath laid a command to be merciful, where the strongest reason and plea may be had against it, Pro. 25. 21. If thine enemy hunger, give him bread to eat, if he be thirsty, give him drink; much more then to the poor.

5. Unmercifulness, it brings a curse, yea, many curses upon men and their estates, Pro. 28. 27. He that hideth his Eye from the poor shall have many a curse; the poor will curse him and not only man, but even God himself curseth them, Psal. 41. 1. Blessed is he that considereth the poor. If a man do it not, shall he have a blessing?

dening? no, Depart from me ye curſed, Mat. 25. 41. For I was hungry, and ye fed me not. And Prov. 3. 33. The curſe of the Lord is in the houſe of the wicked, Sometimes they have not a heart to eat and take the comfort of their eſtates, ſometimes they are perplexed with fears and cares, & ſorrows about their eſtates, ſometimes they are walted at Law, ſometimes by fire or Robbery, ſometimes by ſuch ſecret ways that none can give a rational account of, but know that the curſe of God was there.

6 Unmercifulneſs, it makes men altogether unlike God, who is the father of mercy, and the God of all compaſſion, 2 Cor. 11. 3. He makes the Sun to ariſe on the evil and the good, & ſendeth Rain upon the juſt and upon the unjuſt, *Mat.* 5. 45. He giveth food to all fleſh, Pſ. 136. 25 To each his ſufficing food in due ſeaſon, & fills every living creature with his bleſſing. He gives liberally & upbraideth not; as St. James ſaith, Jam. 5. He hears the deſires of the humble and poor, *Pſal.* 10. 16. He is kind to the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your heavenly father is merciful, *Luk.* 6. 36. But now, that man that is near pinching & miſerable, and doth not regard the condition of the poor, to comfort their hearts, and to ſtrengthen their hand, in filling their hungry bellies, and cloathing their naked bodies, he is unlike and contrary to God, who

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to all love and bowels of mercy, pity, and com-
passion, and ever mindful of the poor, and hath
made a Law for their relief, which standeth re-
corded in the word of God, unalterable, it can
never be repealed or made void. Deut. 15. 7, 8,
9, 10, 11, 14, 15. If there be among you a
poor man, one of the brethren within any
the gates of the land which the Lord thy God
giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine
heart, nor shut thy hand from thy poor Bro-
ther, but thou shalt open thine hand wide un-
to him, & shalt surely lend him sufficient for
his need, in that which he wanteth. Beware
that there be not a thought in thy wicked
heart: saying, the 7th. year, the year of *release*
is at hand, and thine eye be evil against thy
poor Brother, and thou give him nought, and
he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be
sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him, &
thine heart shall not be grieved *when thou* gi-
vest unto him, because that for this thing the
Lord thy God shall bless thee in *all thy works*,
and in all that thou puttest thy hand unto. For
the poor shall never cease out of the Land,
therefore I command thee saying, Thou sha't
open thy hand wide to thy Brother, to the
poor and needy in the land; thou shalt furnish
him liberally out of thy flock, & out of thy
floor, & out of thy Winepress, or that where-
with

with the Lord thy God hath blessed thee, thou shalt give unto him. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bond-man in the land of *Egypt*, & the Lord thy God redeemed thee; therefore I command thee this thing to day. And to this very purpose is that in Lev. 25 35, 36, 37, 38, 39. If thy Brother be waxen *poor* and faln to decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him; yea, though he be a stranger or sojourner with thee, that he may live with thee: thou shalt not give him thy mony upon Usury, or lend him thy victuals upon *increase* take thou no Usury of him nor increase, but fear thy *God*, that thy Brother may love *thee*. Here's two Statute Acts of God himself, that are of more force & greater authority than all the Acts of Men or Parliaments, which shall never be alter'd, but shall be in full force & power to the end of the world, yea, shall be a Law to condemn the gainsayers & neglecters thereof in the day of judgment: Christ saith, Lu. 14. 13. When thou makest a feast call the poor, lame, & the blind, & thou shalt be blessed. And Lu. 14. 18. God anointed Christ to preach the gospel to the poor: and in another place he saith, The poor received the Gospel: And hath not God chosen the poor of the world to be rich in faith, & heirs of the Kingdom, which he has promised to those that love him? In Luke 6. 20. saith Christ,

Blessed.

Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the Kingdom of Heaven. But in the 24 verse, Woe unto you that are Rich, for you have received your consolation. In Luk. 16.25. when Dives cryed unto Abraham to have mercy on him, saith Abraham to him, Remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst the good things. Thou madest thy Riches thy God, & didst shut up thy bowels of compassion against poor Lazarus; therefore thou shalt have no mercy. Judas was a hard hearted wretch, a covetous traitor, that cared not for the poor. If every man would do themselves good by their Estates, it will be in laying them out for the poor: For at the last day Riches, if not imployed to the Glory of God, will certainly rise up in judgment against men. So what Sct. James saith, Chap. 6. ver. 1, 2, 3. Go to now you rich men, weep and howl for the miseries that shall come *upon* you: your riches are corrupted, & your garments moth-eaten, your gold & silver is *cankered*, & the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and *shall* eat your flesh as it were fire. You have heaped up Treasure together for the last day.

3. Unmercifulness, it puts in a Caveat and Bar in the Court of Heaven against our Prayers, that they should have no entertainment there. Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the Poor, he shall cry himself, and

not

not be heard, Prov. 11. 16. Unmerciful men shall come to some great straight or other before they die, so as to cry either to man or God: and when they cry they shall not be heard. They would not hear the poor crying, nor God who sent these poor, and cried to them in these poor; therefore when they cry unto man for help, God will stop their ears and turn their hearts from them, yea, stop his own ears, and turn away his own heart from them, Luk. 6. 38. With the same measure that ye meet, it shall be measured to you again. You stop your ears and God will stop his ear; you shut up your bowels of compassion, and God will shut up his: you withhold your pence, God will withhold his talents; the rich man cried for a drop of water, being in hell torments, but neither Abraham nor God would hearken to his request: he that would not give one crumb, must not receive one drop. Mat. 5. 7. The merciful shall obtain mercy.

8. Unmercifulness is a shrewd sign and badge of a Reprobate condition: a merciless man's name will hardly be found in the Book of Life, Col. 3. 12. Put on (saith St. Paul) as the Elect of God, bowels of mercy and kindness. Those that are the Elect of God have had mercy: and being called, they find and feel that mercy, and cannot but put on the bowels

of

of mercy towards others, which declareth their Election; as God pitied them, so they pitied others. But where there is no bowels of mercy, but churlishness, hardness, cruelty, and unmercifulness, there is a black sign, and a badge of a reprobate condition.

9. Unmercifulness is a degree of Murther, some men hate & curse the poor, and the Scripture blushes not to call them Murtherers, Joh. 3. 14. Whoso hateth his Brother is a Murtherer: And Job, 24. 14. The Murtherer rising with the light, killeth the poor and needy: he deviseth ways how to oppress them; & to suck and squeeze them: and this is a killing of them, and is a Murtherer for it: So when a man sees his brother or neighbour, poor, sinking, and like to be ruined, & will not relieve him, being able to do it, he falls in a degree of murther. A Heathen could see this, who said, that he that hath power to succour a man, being ready to perish, and succours him not, he kills him. Suppose a man is in the water, or fire, you pass by and lend him not your hand, which if you had done, his life might have been saved, are you not then guilty of his death, if you help him not? When the Priest and the Levite passed by the man, that going from Ierusalem to Iericho fell among Thieves, and relieved him not, it was their sin; and had he dyed in that case &

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condition, they had been accessary to his death. If the Poor be our flesh, then our goods are theirs as well as ours, and if we let them perish, we murther them and our selves too.

10. The end of that man will be very sad, who hath been merciless to the Poor; he must have the end of a fruitless and dead tree, he must be hewn down and cast into the fire, Jam. 2. 13. He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy, All judgment, meer severity, and pure wrath shall be his portion.

The chief, if not the only Sin that Christ mentions at the day of judgment, (Mat. 25. 41, 42.) is unmercifulness. To the Righteous saith he, Come ye blessed of my Father, for I was hungry and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink, I was naked and ye cloathed me, therefore I say unto you, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you, from the beginning of the world. But unto the wicked and ungodly saith Christ, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels; For I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink, I was naked and ye cloathed me not: Ye shewed me in my poor members no pitty nor mercy, therefore depart from me, I know you not.

Unmerciful men will have no plea or excuse then for themselves, it will not serve their turn

then to say, I had it not: this will be but an ill answer before the Lord, when they shall come to give an account how they 've used & disposed of those Gods and Talents, which he hath as Stewards intrusted them withal: when God shall (as he will) put this question to them, How have you spent your wealth? how have you advanced my glory by your Estates? how many poor souls have you refreshed? What answer will they have? what can they say for themselves even nothing at all: Their own Consciences will then accuse, and shall bear true witness against them. What have you done with your wealth, saith God? which way have you spent your Estates? Saith conscience then, So much have I spent to please my Appetite in superfluity of vanities, & thus much have I spent to delight mine eye in curious & over-costly cloathing; and thus much have I spent to delight mine ears, & to satisfie my senses in vain delights, and in worldly pomp and pleasure: hundreds and thousands have I spent upon my own base sinful lusts and affections; but what hast thou given to the poor, saith God? When I had any spare money, now and then I gave a half-penny or a brass farthing to a poor man. Ah wretched man, will God say, hadst thou wherewithal to please thy carnal lust, and hadst thou nothing more to spare for my poor members? thou unprofitable servant, thou shalt be cast into

utter

utter darkness where shall be weeping & wailing & gnashing of teeth for ever. Thou wouldst take no pitty or compassion on the poor, therefore I will shew thee no mercy.

Men are very loath to part with any thing for God, but if they did but know the benefit of it, surely they would do it more willingly. When Christ in the 16 of Luke, bid the young man sell all & follow him, he went away very sorrowful, because he had great possessions; He had rather let Christ alone, & Heaven, and Salvation also, than part with all: He did not understand what a blessing it should be to have treasure in Heaven; joy unspeakable, and full of Glory. He did not think of the vanity and uncertainty of earthly Riches; he ne'r thought of death, and how that he must shortly leave all these things behind him. It is a hard thing, qd. Christ for a rich man to enter into Heaven, their hearts are so glued & fastned to the world, that they had rather run the hazard of their precious Souls than lose a part of their estate. They might have laid up in store for the time to come but they have treasured up wrath against the day of wrath. There is no better treasure against the evil day, than that which had been laid up in the works of mercy and charity.

The merciful man (saith Solomon) doth good to his own Soul, Prov. 11. 17. The merciful man killeth two Birds with one stone, he com-

forteth the soul of others that are in want, and thereby layeth up a portion of bliss for his own Soul.

Seeing then uncharitableness is so great an evil, let us put on bowels of mercy, & strengthen the hands, and cover the Nakedness of the poor and needy: it is now a hard time, and things are dear, and trading very small, and the poor abound; and therefore now it is very seasonable for those that are rich to open the bowels of Pitty and Compassion towards the poor, and to succour those that are in want. Holy Job was a Father to the poor, see his 29 Chapter, & the 16. Verse. He did not eat his morsels alone, but the Fatherless and Widow did eat thereof: he delivered the poor, and the Fatherless, & him that had none to help him: and he was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, and the blessing of him that was ready to perish, came upon him; and caused the widows heart to sing for joy, he did not suffer the poor to perish for want of cloathing; Job, 31, 17. The bellies and loins of the poor blessed him; being filled and warmed with the fleshy fleece of his sheep. It were well if Jobs spirit and compassion were in all rich men now, that so the hungry might be fed, the naked cloathed and the necessities of the poor supplied.

Spare something out of your superfluities for them: can you adorn your houses with Pictures

tures & Hangings, your Tables with costly Carpets, your shelves with Brass & Pewter, and your Closets and Cupboards with Plate, and have nothing for the Poor, who are the Temples of God? Can you feed your Dogs & Parrets, Apes and Monkeys, and pamper your horses, and not mind the poor members of Christ that lye at your doors? Can you spend pounds and pounds to satisfie and please your carnal Lusts, in a superfluous manner, and can you not now and then spare a penny to a Poor Christian? how will the Lord take this at your hands?

Remember Dives, he had better to have given all to poor Lazarus than to have met with such an end for his unmercifulness. The Lord Jesus Christ hath told you, that it is a blessed thing to give, Acts 20.35. And it is a blessed thing to shew kindness to Christ; when you give to the poor you give to Christ: Mat. 25. 40. In as much as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. They are Christs brethren they to it unto him, & he accounts it as done to himself Again consider, is it not a blessed thing to have the Lord of Heaven & Earth to be indebted to you? Prov. 19. 17, He that hath pity of the poor, lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he hath given, will he pay him again. God is the poor mans security, he taketh the debt upon him-

himself, & gives thee his word for security; his faithfulness and his honour are both ingaged for performance: had you the Citys Bond, or the publick faiths security for what you disburse towards the poor, it were nothing to his. O give unto the poor, and make God as much as you can indebted to you; he is a good sure Pay-master; Luke 9. 38. Give and it shall be given to you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. If you will not make God your debtor by giving, he will be your Judge for not giving.

We live in dangerous times, and riches are uncertain things; the only way to make them safe, is to bestow them on the poor. One had this Epitaph upon his Tomb. That which I have given, that I have, that which I have kept, that have I lost. Solomon saith, Eccles. 11. 1. Cast thy Bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many daies. If you keep it, you lose it, if you give, you shall find it again.

It is the judgment of some, that no beggers should be relieved that go from door to door, they think it an unwarrantable practise, & the nursury of Vagabonds & vile persons, that live in no calling, and are under no government, but are the shame of the Magistrates, and a disorder in the Common-wealth, and a reproach of the Laws that are made for the relief of the poor in their several respective places. Certainly those

those that beg up & down, being able to work & will not, you ought not to relieve, you sin in doing it: the Apostles rule is, 2 Thes. 3. 10. If any will not work, he must not eat. And further, when begging is made a Trade, I see not how it is justifiable before God, or can be countenanced before man. Yet to conclude it unlawful to give to any that beg, I dare not, Christ healed the blind Begger, Luk. 18. 35, 42. John 9. 7, 8. and did not reprove him for then begging. Besides God hath given out a Rule, Luke 6. 30. Give to every one that asketh of thee; which command would be void & useless if I might not give to no Beggers. Then if you are able, you ought to give to all that are truly poor and needy, even to those who are able to work, and willingly would work, but through the ill disposition of the times, cannot get imployment. Gal. 6. 13. As we have opportunity (saith the Apostle) let us do good unto all. We ought to consider the necessities of the poor they might be in danger of Life, and ready to starve as Lazarus was at Dives door, or they may be sick, or lame, or blind, or aged, and so not able to do any thing for a livelihood.

You have seen the sore evils of unmercifulness, and the great blessings that are promised to such as are merciful, they shall obtain mercy when merciless men shall have no mercy shewn them. Consider that the same God that made

them

them poor, made you rich, and might have made them rich and you poor, you might have been in their condition. Therefore seeing God hath given you talents, wealth, and riches, use them to his Glory; lay up some of them in store for the time to come, for eternal life, by laying them out on the poor, that so at the great day of accounts, the Lord may say unto you, Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into thy Masters joy; thou hast glorified me on earth, now I will glorifie thee in Heaven. Thou hast dispersed abroad, thou hast given to the poor, thy righteousness endureth for ever; thy horn shall be exalted with honour. Psal. 113. 9. Now shalt thou receive the full possession and enjoyment of those unspeakable Pleasures that are in Heaven for ever.

Now then consider what hath been said, and the Lord give you understanding hearts in all things. Now unto him that is able to do abundantly more for us than we can think or desire, the only wise merciful God, be Honour and Glory, now and for ever: Amen.

FINIS.